

## ERRORS OF INFERENCE

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the forces of Nature to divine personalities the worship of the sun of fire and the ungrowth of myths that appealed very strongly to the aesthetic instinct: sacrifice as a means of propitiating evil—even human sacrifices to safeguard great undertakings such as the opening of a campaign or the building of a bridge: customs which plumb the depth of absurdity such as the *couvade* which obliges a father to take to his bed on the birth of a child and eschew all food which would be harmful to the infant.

Such are the errors which have sprung from the first imperfect effects of consciousness. As this faculty has gained strength it has gradually dispelled them by the assistance of accumulated knowledge which sifts out and rejects as causes such happenings or properties whether visioned or imaginary, as are only accidentally connected with the occurrence for which an origin is being sought. Blanks in the chain of inference—confessions of ignorance—are preferred to links which will not bear examination, and we are content to ascribe to chance or accident events that cannot be explained by experience. These blanks have opened a field for the entry of science: there was no room for scientific inquiry when the inferring impulse insisted upon being satisfied by the vision of a cause for every occurrence.

In these modern days science is supported by the close deduction of effects from

causes.  
and we are gratified to observe that  
its flights  
are ever attaining higher altitudes.  
But there  
are countless relics to remind us of  
our descent  
from our ancestors. In Mediterranean  
countries  
people commonly believe in the evil eye  
• nearer  
home there are those who would not  
sit down  
thirteen to table. who think it lucky  
to touch  
wood. unlucky to spill salt, , and put  
their trust